Prince Edward Island
Speech from the Throne

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Speech from the Throne

Delivered by
His Honour
The Honourable
Gilbert R. Clements
Lieutenant Governor

At the Opening of the
Second Session of the
Sixty First General Assembly
of Prince Edward Island

November 23, 2000
3:00 p.m.

His Honour, The Honourable
Gilbert R. Clements
Lieutenant Governor

Madame Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests,

It is an honour for me to open the second session of the Sixty-first General Assembly of the Province of Prince Edward Island. I appreciate having the opportunity to represent Her Majesty the Queen. It is a responsibility which I take seriously, and I intend to follow your deliberations closely.

I wish to welcome all Members of the Legislative Assembly. Your fellow Islanders have placed their trust in you, and I commend you on the responsibility you continue to assume.

Mesdames et Messieurs les membres de l'Assemblée législative, je vous souhaite de nouveau la bienvenue. Vos concitoyens insulaires ont placé leur confiance en vous et je vous félicite de continuer d'assumer cette responsabilité.

Our children must be safe, healthy and educated.

Charting the Course

My Government recognizes that the auspicious future of Prince Edward Island is dependent upon our children and their ability to live in a sustainable natural environment. Our children must be safe, healthy and educated. A clean and healthy environment is important to our long-term economic and social well-being – it is central to our quality of life, now and for the future.

Securing a Fair Partnership

My Government acknowledges that the essence of a strong Canada is built from a position of cooperative federalism, where the roles and responsibilities of federal and provincial governments are honoured, and the fundamental values of Canadians are respected.

Version française également disponible.

The provision of a first-rate and accessible health system requires the federal government to fully commit to its role.

The provision of a first-rate and accessible health system requires the federal government to fully commit to its role. The restoration of Canada Health and Social Transfer must continue if we are to provide the necessary program changes and to acknowledge the inevitable rising costs of our health care system. We are concerned that while federal transfer adjustments will grow at a rate of 3.5 percent, our health costs are growing at a rate of five percent every year.

My Government will continue to urge the federal government to enhance the Canada Health and Social Transfer so that Islanders can have access to programs which are sustainable and comparable to the rest of the country.

My Premier, together with his Atlantic colleagues, will continue to profile the constitutional commitment of the federal government to ensure that all Canadians have access to reasonably comparable public services through the application of an equitable equalization program.

Those programs symbolize what our forefathers agreed to in 1864 – a strong federal government in partnership with the provinces.

...our children are our most important resource.

Our Children, Our Future

My Government recognizes that our children are our most important resource.

We believe that we must optimize the growth and development of our children by investing in the prenatal period and in their early years of development.

My Government's multi-year Healthy Child Development Strategy will be based on the comprehensive recommendations of our provincial Healthy Child Development Advisory Council and extensive public consultations, consistent with the First Ministers' Agreement on Early Childhood Development.

My Government will establish a Premier's Council on Healthy Child Development to advise on the implementation of the recommendations of the Healthy Child Development Strategy, and to monitor and report on outcomes.

...establish a Premier's Council on Healthy Child Development...

This work will be supported by a new Early Childhood Secretariat, also established by My Government to provide enhanced cooperation and coordination of services for children. The secretariat will play a key role in supporting the Premier's council, and will work closely with non-government and community agencies to support key initiatives.

Recognizing that educational opportunities in the prenatal period enhance birth outcomes and help parents prepare for their new roles, we will implement targeted marketing initiatives to maximize participation in prenatal classes across Prince Edward Island. Fees previously charged for this program are being eliminated, new regional standards for prenatal education will be established and program resources will be enhanced.

...new Children's Mental Health Team will continue to strengthen frontline mental health services...

The implementation of a new Children's Mental Health Team will continue to strengthen frontline mental health services for children across the province. Four children's mental health clinicians are being employed to work in the health regions delivering prevention and treatment programs, early intervention programs for youth and families at risk and coordinating our child psychiatry links with the IWK.

My Government is working to establish a Supported Adoption Program to support parents adopting children with significant special care needs. This program will assist in achieving My Government's goal of securing families for all children in the permanent care of the province.

My Government is now developing a Provincial Disability Supports Program to improve access to disability supports, provide more assistance with disability costs, and promote equitable access outside of income support programming. Enhanced assistance for children with disabilities will focus on early interventions to help in overcoming barriers and to ensure that children with disabilities participate fully in Prince Edward Island society.

Enhanced assistance for children with disabilities...

Young children who are exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to suffer from asthma, bronchitis and ear infections, and they require more medical care. Recently, My Government participated with the PEI Tobacco Reduction Alliance in the launch of The Smoke-Free Homes Campaign to reduce exposure of children to second-hand smoke. More than 20,000 Smoke-Free Home decals are now being distributed through Island schools, child care centres and community organizations. We will continue to work with the PEI Tobacco Reduction Alliance to protect children and prevent youth from starting to use tobacco.

...extend the School Milk Program to include all kindergarten children in this province.

Recognizing the very important contribution made by our early childhood educators across the province, we will review operating grants to early childhood education centres to ensure that they more appropriately meet the needs of children and caregivers.

Sound nutrition is a requirement for productive learning. My Government, in cooperation with the dairy industry, will extend the School Milk Program to include all kindergarten children in this province.

Major new child protection legislation will be introduced during this sitting of the Legislative Assembly to set more appropriate boundaries for government, family and community interventions to protect children.

Our Environment

A clean, healthy environment is a primary goal of My Government, and is paramount to the quality of our Island way of life. Clean, safe water – both for drinking and as a habitat for fish and wildlife – is a key element of that goal. My Government is committed to a clean, safe water supply and will be developing measures in the coming months to meet that challenge.

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My Government has worked with other provinces and the federal government to develop Canada-wide standards to control various substances which cause pollution, such as benzene and mercury, and in the coming year, standards will be signed on additional substances.

Since we are the recipients of pollutants from elsewhere that can affect human health, we have worked with Environment Canada to initiate a smog forecast for Prince Edward Island.

My Government is proud of our record in protecting natural areas.

My Government will produce a plan to respond to climate change that will include measures for agriculture, forestry, transportation and the business community. This is part of the response to the Kyoto Agreement in which Canada committed to a six percent reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases.

My Government is proud of our record in protecting natural areas. We have reached the halfway point in our goal of seven percent of land mass for protected areas and we plan to continue to designate areas under the *Natural Areas Protection Act*, or as Wildlife Management Areas.

As well, an action plan for the protection of endangered or vulnerable species has been developed and we will be determining which species need protection under the *Wildlife Conservation Act*.

My Government is developing a plan to deal with the very important issue of climate change. We are also committed to trying to bring natural gas to this province – a fuel which is clean burning and which will provide Islanders with an environmentally friendly choice.

Quality Health Care, a Priority

The priority My Government gives health care reflects the priority of Islanders.

...ensuring an adequate supply and appropriate mix of health-care professionals.

Pivotal to the success of our health and social services system is ensuring an adequate supply and appropriate mix of health-care professionals.

In February 2000, My Government introduced a multi-year physician recruitment strategy and hired a dedicated physician recruiter.

In May, a $6 million, four-year nursing recruitment and retention strategy which included 60 new nursing positions, student sponsorships, summer student employment programs, refresher program cost assistance and enhanced recruitment resources, was announced. A dedicated nurse recruiter was subsequently hired to actively recruit nurses to Prince Edward Island.

My Government will continue to work with our federal, provincial and territorial partners to ensure that our province has the people with the skills needed to provide appropriate levels of care. This work will require a coordinated approach to improve education and recruitment, as well as lifestyle conditions for health-care professionals.

My Government remains committed to improving the delivery of primary health care so that Islanders receive the most appropriate care, by the most appropriate providers, in the most appropriate settings. Building on past success with various primary health care models, we will work with communities and health professionals to design and implement a series of pilot projects to improve access to health services for Islanders.

New investments in medical equipment and technologies will improve access to timely and appropriate diagnostic and treatment services throughout our province.

My Government will continue to consult with hospitals, foundations and community health organizations to determine medical equipment priorities for the province. New investments in medical equipment and technologies will improve access to timely and appropriate diagnostic and treatment services throughout our province.

Planning will continue to establish new MRI and Linear Accelerator services at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The addition of a broader range of diagnostic and treatment technology in a modern health setting will enhance services available within the province, and increase opportunities to recruit and retain a range of health-care professionals.

My Government will support the introduction of new Ultrasound services.

Recognizing the value of early detection and intervention in reducing the incidence and extent of prostate cancer, My Government will support the introduction of new Ultrasound services.

My Government continues to make major investments in health information technology to improve health system management and services. For example, the recent successful reorganization of pharmacy services is now enabling more than 11,000 Islanders to obtain prescriptions at their own pharmacies, in their own communities, using their personal health cards.

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During the coming year, My Government will continue to develop a major new Provincial Radiology Information System to provide the infrastructure to enable the electronic movement of diagnostic images such as X-rays, from facility to facility. We will also pursue the implementation of a Provincial Registry System which will make health information accessible by authorized professionals at the point that a client accesses health or social services.

In addition to promoting timely access to quality health services, My Government is committed to strengthening our commitments to promote health and prevent illness.

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The high incidence of cervical cancer in Prince Edward Island has been a long standing concern. A comprehensive screening awareness campaign is now being implemented to reduce the number of Island women diagnosed with cervical cancer. This aggressive campaign educates Island women about the importance of regular screening, and encourages women to make appointments regularly.

Recognizing that the incidence of Type 2 diabetes will likely increase in Prince Edward Island as our population ages, we will enhance diabetes education programs throughout the province. New diabetes education programs will be based on solid research which suggests that the onset of this disease can be delayed or prevented if a person has the supports they need to remain physically active, maintain a healthy body weight, have a well balanced diet and choose not to smoke.

Acknowledging the potential of the workplace to reach large segments of the population, we will launch a smoke-free workplace campaign in partnership with the Prince Edward Island Tobacco Reduction Alliance. The campaign will encourage workplaces to initiate smoke-free policies, and provide assistance to employees who wish to quit smoking.

My Government will continue to invest in health research. The knowledge generated by local research through our new Prince Edward Island Health Research Program is now contributing to better treatments for disease, more effective delivery of health-care services, and examination of factors that influence the health of Island communities and populations.

My Government will continue to invest in health research.

New health research opportunities also create economic benefits for the province. For example, during the first six months of operation, investments in local research initiatives through the Prince Edward Island Health Research Program brought one-quarter million dollars of new national research funding to our province.

My Government will also continue to provide financial support to the Prince Edward Island Health Research Institute and other initiatives to build our capacity to carry out health research and secure additional research funding.

Planning for the new East Prince Health facility continues...setting the stage for construction in the spring.

Planning for the new East Prince Health facility continues with the completion of the role study, functional program and site preparation. The facility design will be completed this month – setting the stage for construction in the spring.

Planning will continue during the year to expand Community Hospital in O'Leary to include 10 additional long-term nursing-care beds. This expansion, along with the recent addition of 10 additional long-term care beds at the Dr. John Gillis Memorial Lodge in Belfast, will meet immediate needs for long-term care, and better prepare us to meet the needs of an older population.

Recognizing the financial hardship often associated with travel off-Island for specialized medical services, My Government will now provide needed assistance...

Recognizing the financial hardship often associated with travel off-Island for specialized medical services, My Government will now provide needed assistance for families who do not have medical insurance plans. Beginning earlier this month, a new Medical Transport Program has reduced the cost of out-of-province ground ambulance services from $550 to $800 to a much lower standardized rate of $130 for all Islanders, regardless of where they reside in the province. The new transport assistance program is retroactive to April 1, 2000.

Education – An Investment in Our Future

My Government places a high value on lifelong learning for all Islanders, young and old alike. We believe that by providing a quality education in the early years, we will inspire a love of and devotion to learning.

September 2000 saw the first group of children enter a publicly funded, community-based kindergarten system...

September 2000 saw the first group of children enter a publicly funded, community-based kindergarten system on Prince Edward Island. We will continue to work with early childhood educators to implement high quality, province-wide kindergarten.

My departments of Education and Health and Social Services are working together in developing a policy on autism which will include best practices for educating autistic students. My Government is committed to addressing special needs in Island classrooms. This includes supports to students with special needs, their teachers and parents.

My Government began its $43 million Capital Construction Plan for schools in 1997/98. The plan is a multi-year strategy to enhance the infrastructure of 10 Island schools, and provide for the ongoing capital maintenance of all schools in Prince Edward Island.

Planning is currently underway for construction projects for schools in Miscouche, Kinkora and Parkdale. As well, we will continue to work with school boards in determining their capital needs for phase two of the Capital Construction Plan.

My Government is committed to addressing special needs in Island classrooms.

The Comprehensive Education and Training Strategy is a project of the Canada/Prince Edward Island Labour Market Development Agreement and is being developed in partnership with the Department of Education. The strategy focuses on post-secondary education and skills training and will help Islanders and post-secondary institutions prepare for the opportunities available in the expanding knowledge-based economy and other employment areas.

The Staffing and Funding Program provides the mechanism by which My Minister of Education provides funding to school boards. My Department of Education, in consultation with its partners, will review the current program to determine the best methodology to allocate funds to schools boards so that a high quality of education is assured for all Islanders.

The provincial and federal governments, along with the Summerside area francophone community have partnered to build a French school and community centre in the Summerside area. In addition to this new school in Summerside, My Government is supporting French First Language education in other Island communities.

We believe that Acadian and francophone culture and heritage are vital components to the strength of our communities.

My Government is proud that French schools across Prince Edward Island are fulfilling educational and cultural needs of our Acadian and francophone population. My Government will work with individuals, communities and other partners to enable them to value the past, embrace the present and shape the future.

We believe that Acadian and francophone culture and heritage are vital components to the strength of our communities.

Nous considérons que la culture et le patrimoine acadiens et francophones sont essentiels à la vitalité de nos collectivités.

During the present fiscal year an infusion of more than $3 million into elementary and secondary education was made.

My Government continues to view investments in our public school system and increased operational grants to school boards as a high priority. During the present fiscal year, an infusion of more than $3 million into elementary and secondary education was made. These investments included additional funding for teacher assistants, a new math curriculum and a fuel cost adjustment to combat rising heating and transportation costs.

A strong indication that our education system is performing well are the 1999 School Achievement Indicators Program results which relayed that Island 13-year-old and 16-year-old students placed higher than the national average in the science assessment. Our province is pleased to participate in other national and international assessments. Results from these assessments help plan and implement quality programs.

My Minister of Education has named a work group to review the recommendations in the MacNeill report on school administration – **A Perspective on School Administration in Prince Edward Island**. The working group will consist of representatives from the Department of Education, the Prince Edward Island Teachers' Federation, school boards, CUPE and administrators.

Schools across Prince Edward Island participated in the Communication and Information Technology Infrastructure Review. A committee has been established with representatives from My Department of Education, the three school boards and the Teachers' Federation to act on the recommendations put forward in this report.

...increased technical support for information technology in public schools.

The Department of Education, school boards and the Canada/Prince Edward Island Labour Market Development Agreement are partnering on a project that will see increased technical support for information technology in public schools. Over the next several months, hundreds of additional computers will be delivered to schools.

My Government is interested in the needs of Islanders when they leave the public school system.

My Government is interested in the needs of Islanders when they leave the public school system. Our ongoing, Encouraging Island Graduates to Return/Remain Home project, tracks Prince Edward Island undergraduates, and helps decision makers to be more responsive to the needs of high school students in preparation for transition from secondary education to either post-secondary education or the workplace.

My Government will also continue to make youth aware of the opportunities in the trades before they leave school in the very successful Accelerated Secondary Apprenticeship Program.

My Government continues to work toward improving the literacy skills of Islanders. We offer tuition-free access to learning opportunities for adults who wish to improve their literacy skills or who may wish to achieve a General Educational Development Diploma or indeed a Grade 12 certificate for mature students.

On average, 4,800 more Islanders are currently working compared to 1999.

Improving Our Competitive Position Through Job Creation

Robust economic growth this past year has improved labour market conditions in this province. Employment growth surged by almost eight percent during the first 10 months of 2000 compared to the same period last year. On average, 4,800 more Islanders are currently working compared to 1999. That exceptional rate of employment growth is easily the fastest in the nation.

My Government has taken the first step in the delivery of the Atlantic Technology Centre – a state-of-the-art smart building – which will be available to the emerging and growing technology industry in Prince Edward Island.

My Government has realigned the functions of information technology, business development and sector development into one development group. Technology Prince Edward Island, a new crown corporation of the Department of Development and Technology, will provide a leadership role in the development, use and adoption of technology for businesses and communities in Prince Edward Island.

My Government has taken the first step in the delivery of the Atlantic Technology Centre – a state-of-the-art smart building – which will be available to the emerging and growing technology industry in Prince Edward Island. The Atlantic Technology Centre will be dedicated to strategic business development within Prince Edward Island's information technology industry. This Charlottetown-based facility will build upon the growing provincial information technology sector. It will incorporate recommendations from numerous industry and government studies recognizing the positive economic development impacts to be derived through focused clustering of IT companies in a dedicated smart environment.

My Government has initiated the process of identifying opportunities of e-government within the delivery of government services to Island residents and communities. Through the implementation of technology and technology applications, My Government will provide services and information in a more timely and effective manner. The implementation of online automobile registration and the success of our government Web site are only two examples of the opportunities available by utilizing technology to enhance the delivery of our public services.

My Government recognizes the value of all cultural industries to our Island society.

This coming February, the streets of Charlottetown will come alive as hundreds of people from the Atlantic Canadian music industry gather for the East Coast Music Awards. My Government is pleased to support the efforts of the East Coast Music Association through a contribution from the Regional Economic Development Agreement.

My Government recognizes the value of all cultural industries to our Island society. To this end, the Department of Development and Technology will continue to work with this sector to identify industry needs and opportunities for growth.

The value of international exports for the first seven months of this year expanded by 32 percent...

Crafts are a vital component of Prince Edward Island's cultural industry. In consultation with leaders in this important sector, My Government has developed an 11-point program that includes comprehensive support for training and marketing so that the crafts industry can continue to flourish in this province.

Prince Edward Island's export activity continues to grow. The value of international exports for the first seven months of this year expanded by 32 percent, to total $353 million. This burgeoning sector has been enhanced by opportunities afforded through My Government's program of trade development.

Through activities such as the Team Atlantic missions to New England, more companies are exporting their goods and services than ever before. Not only have exports dramatically increased, but the range of exported goods has grown. We are no longer solely shippers of commodity products but have shifted into the servicing of specialty and niche markets. We will continue to focus our efforts on the United States market as well as areas of the globe which offer unique opportunities for our companies.

My Government has always been committed to the growth and sustainability of Island communities.

My Government has always been committed to the growth and sustainability of Island communities. Through the Community Development Fund, we have been able to assist communities in identifying projects they need to help them grow. We have supported projects like the MacLure's Pond Development in the Murray River Area, a Meals on Wheels project in Hunter River and the restoration of the parsonage at Bideford.

To encourage businesses to locate in rural areas of the province, especially West Prince, I am announcing an initiative that will provide special tax incentives...

More needs to be done. To encourage businesses to locate in rural areas of the province, especially West Prince, I am announcing an initiative that will provide special tax incentives for companies willing to locate in those areas. This initiative will be similar to the incentives already in place for Slemon Park, and will provide new employment opportunities.

Islanders must be prepared to accept the challenges that those new opportunities will provide. In the past, some Islanders have had to rely on the Employment Development Agency to find work to sustain them on an annual basis. Beginning immediately, My Government will be providing more training and support for those workers, in the hope that they can secure more meaningful, full-time, private sector work.

Our commitment to Island communities also extends to making government services more easily accessible. Access Prince Edward Island improves public service delivery and supports local communities. My Government has observed the satisfaction of Islanders with the Access Prince Edward Island concept.

Due to My Government's commitment to this province's shipbuilding sector, East Isle Shipyards of Georgetown this year earned a major contract to build two tugs for the Panama Canal Authority.

Nevertheless, our shipbuilding industry will never be on firm footing until a national shipbuilding policy is established. The federal government has pledged to put such a policy in place. My Premier will hold our federal partners to that commitment.

My Government recognizes the contribution of new and expanding businesses to the economic and social health of Islanders and their communities. In the past year, local, national and international companies have invested heavily in new facilities and equipment throughout the province. This growth, and increasing demand for infrastructure supporting knowledge based industries, requires a planned approach to ensuring that all regions across the province have the "business ready" infrastructure required to accommodate the needs of new businesses.

Developments such as the West Royalty Industrial Park and Slemon Park have attracted firms that compete successfully around the world. The Summerside Industrial Park, Borden-Carleton Business Park, Souris Food Park and the Gateway Village development are significant contributors to their local economies. This past year, My Government has cooperated with our federal and municipal partners in the development of new business parks at the Charlottetown Airport and in the communities of Stratford and Cornwall.

Our commitment to Island communities also extends to making government services more easily accessible.

...new business parks at the Charlottetown Airport and in the communities of Stratford and Cornwall.

While still in their infancy, the high level of new investment by the private sector in these business parks is evidence of their confidence in our province and our people. We are further encouraged by the confidence expressed by private developers in rural areas of our province on such projects as the new West Prince Business Park in Bloomfield.

The growth of the small business sector continues to be a priority for My Government.

My Government will continue to work with Island communities on the planned development of a province-wide network of strategically focussed business parks that provide the infrastructure necessary to attract new investment, new businesses, new wealth and new job opportunities to all regions of our province.

The growth of the small business sector continues to be a priority for My Government. Small business support, through Prince Edward Island Business Development, will provide access to information, counselling, business skills development and small business financial assistance programming.

...working toward the development of a nutraceutical industry development strategy for Prince Edward Island.

My Government has supported significant expansion in the snack food, vegetable processing and seafood processing industries. We continue to diversify in an effort to reduce our reliance on commodity products. Partly because of this approach, the potato granule plant at Souris is now operating at full capacity.

Recognizing the growth in the natural products industry as a result of increased consumer awareness on health and nutrition, My Government is working toward the development of a nutraceutical industry development strategy for Prince Edward Island.

Agriculture and Forestry

My Government is committed to policies which support and foster the sustainable development of the agriculture and forest industries and the rural communities of which they are such an integral part. Such policies will help ensure these industries are economically viable, socially responsible and environmentally sound.

My Government is committed to the well-being of our farm community and is supporting the Island potato industry during its current difficulties.

My Government will continue to provide assistance and support to the potato industry to ensure the effects of the potato wart are minimized.

The industry is being provided resources, staff and the foremost expertise in the field to ensure the potato wart problem is handled as expeditiously as possible. The collaboration and cooperation among the Prince Edward Island Potato Board, My Department of Agriculture and Forestry and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has made for an efficient and effective control team. My Government will continue to provide assistance and support to the potato industry to ensure the effects of the potato wart are minimized.

There are now 350,000 acres under Environmental Farm Plans.

Farmers are to be commended for the significant investments they have made to improve the sustainability and productivity of their operations through the completion of Environmental Farm Plans, the establishment of buffer zones, construction of manure storage facilities, provision of alternate watering systems for livestock, improving nutrient management and through other on-farm soil and water conservation projects. There are now 350,000 acres under Environmental Farm Plans. The agriculture community is to be complimented as this significant accomplishment has occurred in only two short years.

In support of the agriculture community's environmental initiatives, My Government will continue to provide financial and technical assistance through the Agriculture and Environmental Resources Conservation Program.

My Government is also committed to working with the industry to reduce the use of pesticides.

Improvements must be made in the use of nutrients such as manure, fertilizer and compost, to protect groundwater resources and ensure that these measures are being used most effectively on crop lands. A new pilot project will be undertaken to support farmers in safe and effective nutrient management decisions.

My Government is also committed to working with the industry to reduce the use of pesticides. Farmers will be encouraged to increase the adoption of integrated pest management practices. My Department of Agriculture and Forestry has appointed the first-ever Reduced Input/Organic Industry Development Officer and is closely consulting with organic growers to establish priorities.

The protection of soil and water quality is a foremost concern of all Islanders and remains a priority of My Government.

To build on the success of these efforts, a new pesticide reduction strategy will be developed, targeting a significant reduction in pesticide use. Additionally, My Government is committed to strengthening the current pesticide certification program to ensure that pesticides are used safely and responsibly.

The protection of soil and water quality is a foremost concern of all Islanders and remains a priority of My Government. Working with the agriculture community, we will ensure that proper steps are taken toward the implementation of mandatory three-year crop rotation. Further measures, including restrictions of crops on high-sloped land and increased enforcement will be considered, in conjunction with the industry, to ensure the sustainability of these important resources.

My Government believes that the future direction of the agriculture and food industry is based on the production and processing of high-value, high-quality products from sustainable systems, and marketing those products around the world under a Prince Edward Island brand. Significant progress has already been made in establishing a foundation for this new food strategy for our province. The success of the maritime beef branding initiative will be used to expand this approach to other sectors and commodities.

A new Prince Edward Island brand will be launched within the next six months.

A new Prince Edward Island brand will be launched within the next six months. Agriculture and food products will be marketed under this brand on a voluntary basis to value-added markets that recognize and reward healthy food from a healthy environment.

In addition to efforts to support sustainable production practices, the new food strategy is being developed with industry input through the new Prince Edward Island Food Alliance. My Government is working with agricultural organizations and commodity groups to develop quality assurance programs, including on-farm and in-plant Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points for small and medium, non-federally registered processors.

My Government will continue to encourage greater diversification in the agriculture industry.

My Government will continue to encourage greater diversification in the agriculture industry. Considerable success has been achieved to date with government support. As a demonstration that Prince Edward Island is fully engaged in the new economy, a new nutraceutical plant was established at Lorne Valley this month. My Government has also supported initiatives for the blueberry, cranberry, horticultural and cole crop producers.

As an example of this direction, blueberry production this past season reached an all-time high of 5.5 million pounds, an increase of 17 percent over 1999, with a farm gate value of over $3 million. That growth illustrates My Government's efforts toward diversifying the agricultural industry.

Since the establishment of the Agriculture Research Investment Fund, more than 45 projects of direct benefit to Prince Edward Island producers have been approved...

Consultations will be taking place over the coming months to expand pollination for horticultural crops. Changes have also been made in the fee structure at the Soil and Feed Lab to make services available at an equitable level for apple, cranberry and blueberry producers.

The competitive position of the agriculture and food industry rests on the adoption of new and innovative practices, supported by ongoing research. Since the establishment of the Agriculture Research Investment Fund, more than 45 projects of direct benefit to Prince Edward Island producers have been approved, with a total investment of $2.3 million. There is a growing demand for additional research projects, and My Government will be consulting with industry on the priorities for this fund.

...monitor farm incomes to ensure that safety net programs continue to be affordable, equitable and effective...

As well, under the Agricultural Industry Transition Program, financial support has been provided to industry organizations to undertake strategic plans to help meet the challenges and opportunities they face. The current program expires in 2001. My Government expects the federal government to continue this program as well as replacing the Primary Resource Development Agreement, which expires in 2001.

Over the past year, My Government has entered into a new three-year agreement on agricultural safety nets. It will continue to closely monitor farm incomes to ensure that safety net programs continue to be affordable, equitable and effective in responding to changes in farm incomes, and to promote the greater stability of the industry.

My Government will also continue to work closely with other partners, such as Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Atlantic Veterinary College and the University of Prince Edward Island, the Food Technology Centre, and the Nova Scotia Agricultural College to ensure that our industry remains on the leading edge of new advances.

Over the past year, the Department of Agriculture and Forestry has increased staff and resources in district offices to improve the delivery of services and programs. New specialist positions have been established in areas such as new crop development and farm financial management.

...increased staff and resources in district offices to improve the delivery of services and programs.

My Government believes that the future of rural communities is closely tied to people who live and work in those communities. Creating more economic and employment opportunities in rural Prince Edward Island has been a fundamental commitment of this Government. That commitment includes the continuation of our tradition of family farming. Accordingly, My Government will be consulting with industry toward the development of a program to enable new farmers to enter the agriculture industry.

...increase seedling production to three million trees this year...

The sustainability of the forest industry is of paramount importance to My Government. There are increasing public concerns over the level of harvesting and reforestation. My Government has announced its intention to increase seedling production to three million trees this year, and for additional increases in coming years. My Government will also develop new incentives for forest land owners who reforest cut lands.

Beginning immediately, every baby born in Prince Edward Island will receive a commemorative red oak seedling from My Government. This initiative is an expression of confidence in the future of our children and in the sustainability of our forestry resources for present and future generations.

A new Public Forest Council will be established to promote community-based initiatives in provincial forests. This new council will have the mandate to work with community groups and the private sector to establish value-added opportunities in non-traditional forest products and activities.

A new Public Forest Council will be established...

My Government will be releasing an annual State of Forest Indicators to keep the public and the industry informed on progress toward a more sustainable forest resource for present and future generations of Islanders.

My Government recognizes the fundamental importance of a policy, legislative and regulatory climate that contributes to innovation, growth and development. The Department of Agriculture and Forestry will be undertaking a review of all legislation assigned to it; and, where appropriate, measures will be introduced for amendment, repeal or creation of new legislation.

Fisheries and Aquaculture

The shrimp resource is providing more than one quarter million dollars in direct payments to our fishing and processing sectors...

My Government will continue to place a high priority on access to a fair share of fisheries resources for Prince Edward Island. Our approach of advocating to the federal resource managers on behalf of our fishing industry resulted in an allocation of 1,500 metric tons of northern shrimp to Prince Edward Island. The shrimp resource is providing more than one-quarter million dollars in direct payments to our fishing and processing sectors on an annual basis and has provided employment to Islanders.

Lobster continues to be the most important species in our fishery, and My Government has recognized the significance of this fishery by introducing the Lobster Strategy. The strategy is designed to augment the tools available to My Government for the maintenance and development of the lobster industry as a key element of the economy of rural Island communities. Through the strategy, a quarter million dollar commitment has already been made to the AVC Lobster Science Centre to promote research on lobster. As a result, a major data collection program is in place and a detailed research and development program will be implemented in consultation with the lobster industry.

...a quarter million dollar commitment has already been made to the AVC Lobster Science Centre to promote research on lobster.

While the aquaculture industry in the province is maturing, there is ongoing need for research support; and My Government will work with the federal government and our research institutions to expand that capability.

My Government also recognizes that there is real potential for further growth in aquaculture, particularly the finfish sector, through the development of hatchery technology taking advantage of our excellent groundwater resources. Support will also continue to develop new shellfish culture and to continue our highly successful shellfish enhancement programs.

Support will also continue to develop new shellfish culture...

Tourism

Following several years of significant growth, tourism activity fell slightly in Prince Edward Island in 2000. This reflects a trend experienced across Canada. Poor weather, rising fuel prices and a summer-long threat of an air strike all impacted on our industry.

My Government is optimistic that tourism will rebound in 2001, and is taking steps to ensure that positive growth is reestablished well into the future.

My Government will implement new and aggressive marketing initiatives in partnership with the industry, the other Atlantic provinces and the federal government under the recently signed Atlantic Canada Tourism Partnership.

...new and aggressive marketing initiatives in partnership with the industry...

Our provincial park system attracts visitors to our province and makes a strong case for their return. My Government is working to more aggressively promote our parks to encourage greater shoulder season activity.

Community and Cultural Affairs

My Government appreciates the importance of community infrastructure to the development of this province and to the safety and well-being of its citizens.

My Government will contribute $12.8 million over the next six years to a new infrastructure program...

To that end, My Government will contribute $12.8 million over the next six years to a new infrastructure program which, with the federal and municipal contributions, will result in $38 million of new and enhanced infrastructure for Island communities. This program will dedicate at least 60 percent of the funds to environmental project enhancements such as sewer and water, and waste-water treatment facilities.

My Government recognizes the importance of cultural diversity to an enriched Prince Edward Island. We will continue to work with our partners in the multicultural community to promote and ensure cultural understanding and harmony.

Transportation and Public Works

Efforts continue to negotiate a cost-sharing agreement with our federal partners to provide adequate funding to maintain essential highway infrastructure.

Funding for highway construction, previously provided under the Atlantic Freight Rate Transition Agreement, has been exhausted. As a result, all highway construction is funded by My Government. Efforts continue to negotiate a cost-sharing agreement with our federal partners to provide adequate funding to maintain essential highway infrastructure.

My Government continues to support the Charlottetown Airport Authority. Islanders are currently under-served by the airline industry, and My Government continues to work in conjunction with the Charlottetown Airport Authority to increase capacity at our province's only commercial airport.

My Government continues to support the Charlottetown Airport Authority.

Safety for bicycle riders has been promoted by My Government by utilizing *The Cool Pedal Gang* bike helmet promotional materials. During the summer months, these materials were used at a number of provincial exhibitions to promote the use of bike helmets. There are plans to offer these educational materials to all elementary schools across the province to assist in the promotion of bike helmet use.

In response to community needs, and to comply with our national and international obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, My Government will be conducting a thorough examination of the concept of public transportation. The various economic, environmental and community implications surrounding public transportation will also be examined to identify what possible benefits might accrue.

My Government will be conducting a thorough examination of the concept of public transportation.

My Government, in partnership with the communities of Charlottetown, Stratford and Cornwall, is engaged in a Comprehensive Transportation Study. This study – the first of its kind in nearly 25 years – will provide key baseline data on topics such as traffic habits and patterns, parking availability and the existing street network. The information collected will form the basis of a high-tech, traffic-modeling system which will be a useful tool for communities as they plan future developments.

Through the Environmental Management Division of the Department of Transportation and Public Works, My Government is effectively incorporating environmental best practices into day-to-day maintenance and construction activities. At a recent national meeting of the Transportation Association of Canada, the efforts of the Environmental Management Division stood out as a model for other provinces. Through partnerships with watershed and community groups, the Department of Transportation and Public Works will continue to play a leadership role in promoting construction activities that are environmentally sensitive.

The Low Income Tax Reduction Program is an initiative of My Government that will benefit approximatly 17,200 Islanders.

Landmark Legislation to Support Our Objectives

During the course of the Second Session of the Sixty-first General Assembly, My Government will bring forward a significant number of legislative proposals for the consideration of all Members of the Assembly. Most notably is legislation respecting the Low Income Tax Reduction Program and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

***My Government will introduce the* Freedom of Information and Protection Privacy Act.**

The Low Income Tax Reduction Program is an initiative of My Government that will benefit approximatly 17,200 Islanders. The program will exempt almost 4,900 low-income Islanders from paying any provincial income tax. During this session, My Government will introduce amendments to the *Income Tax Act* to facilitate this progressive initiative.

During this session, My Government will introduce the *Freedom of Information and Protection Privacy Act*. This important legislation will consolidate and formalize the way information is handled within the public service and ensure that both access and privacy rights are adhered to when government handles personal information.

An Agenda Reflecting Islander's Priorities

Madame Speaker, Members of the Assembly, My Government continues to build upon the comprehensive agenda which Islanders endorsed this past April. Our direction reflects Islanders' priorities for the provision of quality health care and education, sustainable economic development and job creation, and support for our traditional industries and our communities.

Our direction reflects Islanders' priorities...

My Government is committed to those ideals, and foresees a prosperous future for Prince Edward Island and its citizens.

Madame Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly, may Divine Providence guide your deliberations.

Madame la Présidente, membres de l'Assemblée législative, que la divine providence vous guide dans vos délibérations.

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